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TAGS: PREL EAID KDEM FR IZ

SUBJECT: INFORMAL FRENCH RESPONSE TO S/I SATTERFIELD'S PAPER ON INCREASING FRENCH INVOLVEMENT IN IRAQ

REF: PARIS 83

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4. (b), (d).

¶1. (U) See action request in the second sub-tick of para 3.

¶2. (C) French MFA Iraq desk officer Olivier Masseret on January 8 gave us an "informal" response to the paper S/I David Satterfield passed to the Elysee and the MFA on December 28. Masseret explained that we would receive an "official" response in written form following DAS-equivalent Franck Gellet's return to Paris after accompanying French President Sarkozy to the Gulf (Sarkozy returned to Paris January 15). Masseret claimed that the formal French response will have been fully coordinated throughout the French interagency and blessed by the Council of Ministers.

¶3. (C) Following the organization of the Satterfield paper (text at para 7), Masseret outlined the French views as follows:

--Economic assistance: This was the part of the paper Masseret indicated where there was the least U.S./French convergence.

- o With respect to France depositing a total of USD 10 million with the World Bank and/or UN Development Group Iraq Trust Funds, Masseret said that France continues to place an emphasis on the need for national reconciliation and other signs of positive change in Iraq before it will allocate significant funds for development. He stated that the GOF worries, given the current security situation and political impasse among Iraqi leaders, that the money would be wasted. The French interagency had, therefore, stopped short of arguing over whether budget funds existed to make even a token contribution as requested.

- o Regarding the proposal that France host the next Iraqi Compact (ICI) meeting in April, Masseret was more nuanced but still generally negative. He referred to delays in getting the first Compact meeting organized and was uncertain that such a meeting would sufficiently complement efforts at addressing core political issues, like national reconciliation. Masseret subsequently explained to PolMinCouns during the visit of Staffdel Diamond that the GOF had made no definitive decision on hosting the Compact meeting. (Comment/Action request: Washington may wish to send instructions with points supporting our argument as to why Paris should host this meeting and with background as to ongoing contacts that may be occurring on this at high levels between Washington and Paris. Any points should stress the link between a meeting on the compact and how it would facilitate broader national reconciliation. Any such reference should not assume the French view their proposal to host intra-Iraqi talks as the only or best one on the table but merely take into account the high priority France accords

this goal. End comment/action request)

- o Masseret said the GOF was unaware of the January 17-18 IRFFI meeting in Naples on improving donor coordination. He said it was too late to muster a delegation for this event, since most of the people the GOF would send were tied up preparing for Sarkozy's Gulf trip.

- o As regards encouraging Russia to sign a bilateral debt reduction agreement with Iraq per its Paris Club commitment, Masseret said that previous appeals had not been effective. This underscored what he called France's loss of leverage over Moscow in a number of areas in recent months. The nature of the bilateral debt -- involving oil and barter-type trade in other goods -- was too complicated to lend itself to the sort of deal we advocated. Still, France would continue to use every occasion within the Paris Club to urge the Russians to reduce their bilateral debt with Iraq. (Note: The Russian delegation to the January Paris Club said the GOR expects to sign its bilateral agreement during February 11)12 meetings with Iraqi officials in Moscow. End note)

--Health sector: Masseret stated that France agrees with the USG suggestions and would likely have more to make after Dr. Frederic Tissot, a physician and longtime friend of FM Kouchner who worked alongside each other in places like Kurdistan, takes over as head of the new branch office of the French embassy in Irbil (see para for more information). Keeping the focus on the Kurdish north makes the most sense for France in terms of its initial activities due to the more benign security environment.

--Rule of law: Masseret expressed general approval of the suggestions. He agreed in particular that France might have

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something useful to offer in terms of tackling juvenile crime. With respect to the suggestion of sponsoring a training program for Iraqi security forces by the French Gendarmerie, Masseret recalled the Chirac-era idea of establishing a training academy in Qatar with French participation. As the security situation in Iraq deteriorated, the concern rose that the forces trained were defecting to militia groups. Echoing previously expressed views, Masseret repeated France's belief that such training efforts could only be undertaken when the question of militia infiltration was resolved. He hoped the positive evolution of the security situation would help in that regard. As a technical point, Masseret asked whether the paper's reference to "legisprudence" was actually to "jurisprudence."

--Diplomatic engagement: As with much of the section on rule of law, Masseret argued that France is playing a stepped-up role. With specific respect to providing additional funds for UNAMI to procure vehicles and helicopters to carry out its mission, Masseret said the budget implications were a huge problem for France. The question of helping with helicopters was especially difficult, as has been seen in terms of devoting additional assets to Afghanistan.

¶4. (C) Picking up on Kouchner's offer at the Istanbul conference to host an intra-Iraqi dialogue aimed at promoting national reconciliation, Masseret indicated this remains one of France's high priorities. He acknowledged the signal failure of a similar French effort on Lebanon and stressed that France has merely offered to host such an event if the Iraqis wish to see it occur. (Comment: The January 14 French MFA press briefing noted, in the context of a response to a question on recent Iraqi legislation on de-Ba'thification, that France "supports everything that moves in the direction of national reconciliation and an easing of tensions in Iraq. President (Sarkozy) repeated in his January 13 al-Hayat interview that France was ready to welcome an intra-Iraqi conference" aimed at promoting harmony. The statement emphasized that it was up to the different parties to decide whether to follow up. End

comment)

15. (C) Masseret spoke briefly about plans to open the French embassy's branch office (not a consulate) in Irbil. The French have found a villa to rent and are about to start the two- to four-month process of converting it to the intended use, i.e., suggesting a late spring opening. FM Kouchner has named Dr. Frederic Tissot, a physician and longtime collaborator on humanitarian issues including in Iraq's Kurdish area, to head up the office. (Note: Tissot was France's coordinator for humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan 2002-2004. End note) Masseret explained that one of the reasons for the delay in preparing the office was the need to adapt it to Tissot's needs, since Tissot has been a paraplegic since a tragic accident in Haiti in 2006. He has, according to Masseret, already visited the region and met local leaders as a prelude to his eventual installation. As for other staffing in Irbil, Masseret stated that the MFA has received interagency agreement to transfer the commercial attache covering Iraq from Amman, where that operation was relocated after the 2003 invasion, to Irbil.

16. (SBU) Finally, Masseret introduced us to Xavier Roze, France's former ambassador to Laos and recently named to replace Jean-Pierre Guinhut as France's inter-ministerial coordinator for assistance to Iraq.

17. (SBU) The following is the text of the paper S/I Satterfield handed over on December 28, 2007:

Increasing French Involvement in Iraq

Economic Assistance

--Deposit a total of \$10 million with the World Bank and/or UN Development Group Iraq Trust Funds (ITF's). Such a donation would make France a member of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI) and would gain France a full seat at the table with other leading donors. To date, France has channeled its assistance through the EU, which is by far the largest contributor to the IRFFI.

--Host the Next ICI Annual Meeting. Deputy Secretary Kimmit raised the possibility of hosting such an event in April. The meeting could be used to showcase Iraqi progress on reform while encouraging international partners to make debt relief announcements.

--Attend the January 17-18 IRFFI meeting in Naples, Italy to discuss and make plans for improving donor coordination. We look to France to take up a leading role helping to

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coordinate international donor assistance to Iraq. Along with other donors, we would welcome French involvement.

--Encourage Russia to reach a bilateral debt reduction agreement with the GOI. As current chair of the Paris Club and one of the first countries to reduce Iraq's Saddam-era debt, France may be able to sway Russia to conclude a deal reducing Iraqi debt by approximately \$2 billion.

Health Sector

--Provide medical support, possibly through a network of dispensaries, to refugee camps and internally displaced persons in northern Iraq. While some camps have clinics, these are usually understaffed and poorly stocked with medical supplies. The need for medical care in this area is even greater since the staff of the Zaytun Hospital was reduced by half. Once security improves further, similar missions could be opened in other areas.

--Encourage Iraqi central government engagement with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Ministry of Health (MoH). Assist the KRG with regional health projects. The KRG has

identified a number of beneficial regional health projects to undertake, but is having difficulty obtaining the necessary funds and other resources.

Rule of Law

--Train law and investigative judges and upgrade court infrastructure. The Iraqi legal system is Napoleonic, making French expertise invaluable for capacity-building assistance.

Such training could increase the speed at which security detainees and officials accused of corruption are processed, and greatly improve legal proceedings and the workings of government.

--Develop youth diversion programming and provide training to Juvenile Police and Juvenile Court staff. The Iraqi juvenile justice system lacks the capacity to handle its burgeoning juvenile detainee population. Without system reform and capacity enhancement, juvenile detainees might have to be mixed with adult offenders.

--Sponsor a training program for the Iraqi security forces by the Gendarmerie. The GOI has requested that any future training occur inside Iraq. Training in northern Iraq could be a viable option.

--Provide civil code drafting experts and other professionals to assist in the lawmaking process and help establish a legislative tracking system. Because the Shura Council is modeled after the Council of State in France and French Universities have been a leader in the field of legisprudence, the French would be well-positioned to provide assistance in this area.

Diplomatic Engagement

--Use France's upcoming term in the EU Presidency to encourage greater EU assistance to Iraq.

--Encourage France to support UNAMI's efforts to carry out its expanded mandate. This could include funds for UN security, vehicles and/or helicopters to assist with the movement of UNAMI personnel and other resources to troubled areas, assist with the upgrading of local emergency hospitals.

--Participate in upcoming meetings of the Expanded Neighbors, Working Groups and encourage regional states to make better use of the Neighbors mechanism. The dates for the next working group meetings have not been set, but the hosts understand that these meetings need to take very soon. France could attend these meeting as an observer and encourage regional states to make better use of the process.

--Support GOI efforts to peacefully reintegrate returning Iraqis. The displacement of two million Iraqis as refugees abroad and another two million internally has humanitarian, political, security, and development implications, affecting regional and internal stability and the eventual reconstruction of Iraq. Efficient and peaceful integration of returning Iraqis will require the GOI to finalize a national policy as well as create a bottom-up strategy and put the infrastructure in place to carry out both.

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